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ABSTRACT

In this narrative portion of a slide presentation, the Rural Network of the Teachers' Centers Exchange is introduced and described. The Network was begun in 1977 and serves to encourage and facilitate interaction among member teacher centers through conferences and workparties, and by correspondence and visits. Through the Network, the centers have shared program ideas and found solutions to problems and concerns unique to the rural environment. Among the centers which are briefly described are: Western Nebraska Rural Teachers Center, the Goddard College Teachers Center: (Vermont): Project RISE (Connecticut): North Dakota Teacher Center Network: Grassroots Teacher/Parent Resource Center (New York): and Cherokee County Teacher Center (Kansas). The Network also includes individuals and consortiums as members. (FG)

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FROM A RURAL PERSPECTIVE

Mary E. Hamilton, Ed. D., Presenter

for

NATIONAL TEACHER CENTERS WORKSHOP
ON NEW STRATEGIES FOR INSERVICE EDUCATION

Saturday, June 27, 1981
Special Action Session
10:30 A.M.

Sheraton National Hotel
Washington, D. C.

The Rural Network

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INTRODUCTION

From A Rural Perspective was written for use in an audio visual presentation. Each accompanying slide represents a teacher center, institution or group who designed and constructed the block pictured in the visual and which is a portion of a quilt displayed in the Rural Teachers Centers Exhibit at the Teacher Centers Program National Conference, Washington, D. C., June, 1981.

Network members made the quilt to

1. show ways in which the topic of quilting might be investigated
2. remind themselves how learning occurs experientially and, therefore, how children learn
3. symbolize the sharing, linking, building and support of the network process

The quilt was a product of a Rural Network Workparty, May 3-7, 1981, hosted by the Southwest Arkansas Teacher Center, Texarkana, Arkansas, and sponsored by the Teachers' Centers' Exchange. The Workparty site was Petit Jean State Park, Arkansas.

Dr. Mary E. Hamilton, program presenter, has been director of the Southwest Arkansas Teacher Center since September, 1978. She was Chairperson of the Policy Board from August, 1977, to becoming director.

FROM A RURAL PERSPECTIVE

The Rural Network is composed of educators in either federally- or non-federally-funded rural teachers' centers. The Network is sponsored by the THE TEACHERS' CENTERS EXCHANGE, Far West Laboratory. Lorraine Keeney, assisted by Gretchen Thomas, is the organization's facilitator. Any person affiliated with a rural center or supportive of rural centers is welcome to become involved. Inquiries should be addressed to either of the facilitators, 1855 Folsom Street, San Francisco, California 94103.

The network began at a Teachers' Centers Exchange-sponsored Workparty in 1977, in St. Louis, when a rural caucus met to talk about particularly rural issues and overall teachers' centers issues from a rural perspective. Some of the centers represented at that meeting later received federal funds; others continue in the network with local, university or regional money.

The network has held four annual workparties sponsored by the Teachers' Centers Exchange and hosted by individual centers. The first was hosted by Anne Watt in Wilmington, Vermont, at the MOUNTAIN TOWNS' TEACHER CENTER, in 1978. Since then, host centers have been the WASHINGTON WEST RESOURCE CENTER in Waitsfield, Vermont, directed by Wade Scherer; the WESTERN NEBRASKA RURAL TEACHER CENTER in Sidney, Nebraska, directed by Marge Curtiss; and the most recent host, the SOUTHWEST ARKANSAS TEACHER of Texarkana, Arkansas, directed by Mary Hamilton.

The theme of the 1981 workparty was "Making the Natural Connection" and was most appropriately held among the natural beauty of Petit Jean State Park in Central Arkansas, May 3-7. Next year's workparty is

slated for Cortland, New York, with host director, Heidi Watts.

Network members take advantage of National Teacher Centers Conferences by seeking opportunities to meet together during non-scheduled times. Prior to this National Conference was a session at the 1979 Fall Meeting of Teacher Centers.

Besides yearly workparties and conference-time meetings, one of the primary functions of the Network is to encourage and facilitate interaction among members by telephone, letter and personal visits. Rural Centers, often in isolated areas, need the support of others with similar concerns. For example, the WASHINGTON WEST RESOURCE CENTER in Waitsfield, Vermont, and PROJECT RISE in Colchester, Connecticut, have met several times to share information about their advisory programs. Day-to-day networking, the foundation of the organization, is to stimulate exchanges of written materials, practical expertise about the supportive nature of the network, solutions to uniquely rural problems and concerns which may be shared, and help and advice which is based on practical experience.

Member centers throughout the United States are highly diversified but have many common characteristics. Carved into the soils of Western Nebraska's plains are the enduring marks of the wagon wheels of countless pioneers who headed west in the 1800's. The WESTERN NEBRASKA RURAL TEACHER CENTER is a modern pioneer--Nebraska's first and, currently, only teacher center. It is carving its mark in the region's educational structure. Serving 380 teachers and 30 schools in four counties which were crossed by those pioneers a century ago, the Teacher Center, part of Educational Service Unit #14, in Sidney, Nebraska, has helped to bring teachers together to share their special skills, to prepare curricular materials for individual classrooms, to attend workshops and

college classes and to study and develop comprehensive curriculum plans for entire schools.

Nestled in the ski country of Waitsfield, Vermont, is the WASHINGTON WEST RESOURCE CENTER, serving teachers in schools as far as one hour drive through the back roads of this snowy, mountainous state. The Old Post Office serves as the hub for teachers' center services--from classroom to district-level staff curriculum assistance, to graduate level courses, to a teacher Incentive Award Program, to the access by small rural schools to videotape equipment and Instructional Television programming, to a professional library and curriculum materials collection accessible through the Center-on-Wheels.

The critical links to the Resource Center's staff services, resources, and program activities are the teacher advisors who serve all thirty-two schools on a scheduled basis. Center teacher advisors help teachers with curriculum, classroom management and organizational concerns. Teacher advisor interns expand the role of staff advisors by working with individuals and groups of teachers during their release time one-half day each week of the school year. Teacher advisors and interns complement their services in each school and participate in training activities. The outreach services of the Center reduce the all too familiar syndrome of isolation felt by many educators in rural environments.

The TEACHERS' CENTER, GODDARD COLLEGE, Plainfield, Vermont, housed in light pleasant rooms in a dormatory building at the College, offers services to parents and Head Start education students and aides as well as private and public kindergarten through grade twelve teachers. Center staffers make connections among teachers and visit classrooms to work with teachers and students on request. Celia Houghton is Center director.

Since 1967, the CURRICULUM WORKSHOP, Bennington, Vermont, has helped teachers create their own teaching environments in which creativity, discovery, doing and questioning are an open-ended process. The director serves eleven rural schools by appointment--bringing her own services and materials. Two days each week are devoted to working with teachers at the Workshop as they create, discover and experiment on such topics as: "Blob Maps," "Wood Sculpture and Mapping," "Nutrition Lessons Using the Cut Paper Technique," "Hug-A-Tree (Exploring the Environment of a Tree" or "Pond Study." Quilting has been used as a tool for teaching mathematics, social studies and language arts.

Certification credits are earned by a teacher logging 15 hours of meaningful work at the Center or in a series of teacher-to-teacher workshops. Local funds have supported the Curriculum Workshop for the past seven years.

Neighboring PROJECT RISE in Colchester, Connecticut, is similar in mission to Vermont centers. The nine rays of the rising sun comprise the Project Rise logo and represent the nine rural and small town boards of education that participate in Regional Inservice Education (RISE). Part of the philosophy of the rural teachers' center, like the rays of the sun, is to radiate help out to the districts rather than expecting the 600 teachers in the widely scattered eastern Connecticut service area to come to the Center. Getting services to people, an essential ingredient of working successfully in rural areas, says Director Peter Martin, is expensive and points to one of the unique problems faced by rural teacher centers.

Another center with just such problems is Moab, Utah's. The MOAB TEACHER CENTER provides both a place and the resource for teachers to

upgrade their professional skills. Moab is a remote and isolated community in southeast Utah, surrounded by federal lands, national parks, forests and bureau of land management lands. The Center is four hours' driving time from any university. Professional development programs are most often presented in the population centers which are a five-hour drive, consequently teacher attendance is often limited.

Director Barbara Ing emphasizes that the Center provides services to teachers who would otherwise never have such opportunities. Ninety-four percent of all Moab teachers have used some Teacher Center service.

Scallop and other fishing is the primary non-tourist industry of Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, and Susan Mitchell's seashell quilt square symbolizes this commercial industry's importance to the residents.

The NANTUCKET LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER is equally as vital to teachers who are isolated 30 miles from the mainland coast.

Several centers operate on reservations for Native Americans. One is the RURAL NEW MEXICO TEACHER CENTER, directed by Joan Metzler. That center works with teachers who are mostly external to the two Native American tribes, Zuni and Navajo. The Zuni site is located in one wing of a former hospital. The Pine Hill site (Navajo) is in an old library. Both sites are isolated and rural.

A center objective is to help teachers understand and appreciate Zuni and Navajo cultures and languages. Workshops have included "Patterns of Magic," "Communication Skills," "Archaeology," "Puppetry," and "Classroom Management." All teacher inservice is done on volunteer time.

The CHEROKEE NATION OF OKLAHOMA, located in Tahlequah, is in the process of setting up a teaching center. On staff are a teacher of gifted

and talented students, a cultural resource teacher and a career guidance counselor. The Civilized Tribes are here represented on the back of a tortoise.

LITTLE WOUND TEACHER CENTER, Pine Ridge Reservation, is located in a remodeled dining room of the Little Wound School, Kyle, South Dakota. Kyle is centrally located in the second largest reservation in the United States. It encompasses 4,353 square miles which are bounded by the Black Hills on the west, the Badlands on the north and Nebraska to the south. The Center was initiated with funds from Teacher Corps, federal impact aid and local funds.

UPDATE TEACHER CENTER is located near the site of Oklahoma University in Stillwater. Joye Butler, director, believes that UPDATE's primary accomplishment has been achieved through teachers teaching teachers--sharing together in a more open environment.

Communication, of course, is a terrific problem in all rural centers --some more so than others. The SOUTHEAST IDAHO TEACHER CENTER CONSORTIUM, Twin Falls, Idaho, relies exclusively upon the agricultural extension agent model operation (face-to-face personal contacts by field agents). No surveys are used; all assessments of needs are person-to-person by liaison teachers using small group process at the building level. Needs assessment techniques have been adopted by numerous other centers. Evaluation, however, is by an external agent. Buck Boston is the Center's director.

THE SOUTHWEST AND WEST CENTRAL TEACHER CENTER, Marshall, Minnesota, disseminates information via a newsletter chocked full of ideas and activities, plus a schedule for the traveling van which takes games,

idea books and other information or activities right out to teachers. Staffer, Judy Zobel, emphasizes changes which have occurred because of the Center with a square entitled, "Prairie Winds of Change."

The impact of the TEACHER CENTER OF ALBEMARLE, North Carolina, has been analogous to metamorphosis of the butterfly. As a result of experiences provided by Teacher Center projects such as Teachers Helping Teachers, Teacher Awards, Incentive Grants, Release Days, Support Groups, Workshops and Sharing Sessions, many teachers have developed, refined and shared ideas, thereby giving outlet to special talents and interests. The Teacher Center has served as a cocoon for professional nourishment and growth for teachers--supporting and encouranging them as they emerged as more confident, self-actualized professionals.

The SOUTHERN PEIDMONT EDUCATIONAL CONSORTIUM (SPEC) TEACHER CENTER has exhibited many distinguishing features since its inception in 1978. The fact that the project received the second largest grant of its kind in the United States is perhaps one of its most credible and interesting attributes. The Center is no less distinguished by the fact that there are three different sites: Monroe, Kiser and Carrabus.

Mini awards are an important part of the program at DISTRICT M TEACHER CENTER in Radford, Virginia. Of 23 proposals submitted for Curriculum Development Projects last February, 11 proposals were funded for a total of $4,000.

Teachers can occupy their summers by attending workshops on such topics as "Television Awareness," "Creative ABC's for Gifted Children" or "Conservation for Secondary School Teachers."

The NORTH DAKOTA TEACHER CENTER NETWORK, the oldest state-wide network of teachers' centers within the Rural Network, has been meeting

in North Dakota since 1976 when it formed to help establish four centers. Today there are nine centers, all of which serve a least some rural schools. One project was formed especially to serve thirty-seven small schools in the state which are located too far away to use any of the other eight centers. These schools typically have from three to fifteen teachers scattered over a wide geographic area. Close attention is given to linking nearby teachers with others who share similar interests, concerns or teaching settings. Community/school events are held on rural and small school issues. Outside speakers and special workshops or training sessions may be repeated at several sites.

Several centers work directly with children or children and teachers. The WAXAHACHIE ADVISOR CENTER FOR TEACHERS runs "children's days" when teachers bring children to the Center for work with an advisor on developing a new technique in a classroom-like situation. The Center includes a Media project for teachers, students and classrooms for indepth study. The project is community oriented, uses film animations and works with a local Public Broadcasting Service television station. The Center is a videotape library for the Waxahachie Schools which fund it. Waxahachie, mostly a farming area, has a population of 14,000 persons but considers itself a rural town.

Other centers work especially well with parents. The RURAL TEACHERS' CENTER CONSORTIUM, a loosely organized group of rural school districts, and the GRASSROOTS TEACHERS/PARENT RESOURCE CENTER at the State University of New York in Cortland work closely together to provide inservice opportunities for schools in central New York. The Grassroots Center's director, Heidi Watts, provides materials, work space, workshops and conferences for parents, teachers and college students. The Center itself,

part of the Institute for Experimentation in Teacher Education within the Professional Studies Division at Cortland is a lively, bustling place, occupying two large and one small room. There are programs for experienced professionals, new teachers and college students. A secondary center is just forming. Activities in inservice are being moved on-site to schools as much as possible.

Resources are a major part of some centers. An Apple II Micro-Computer, Ektagraph Visualmaker for making slides and a folding machine are only a part of the equipment available for teachers at the NORTHWEST MISSISSIPPI TEACHER CENTER in Senatobia, Mississippi. Story Starters, The Spelling Box, Unique Reading Games and Write-On are a sample of the numerous activities that may be taken from the Center into the classrooms.

Cooperation and collaboration are the keys to working in rural areas. Doors were opened for cooperative efforts when the CARROLL COUNTY TEACHER CENTER of Huntington, Tennessee, collected, listed, coded, compiled and categorized audio-visual resources from seven school systems in their area. An exchange program was then initiated.

FLINT HILLS TEACHER CENTER in Ogden, Kansas, collaborates with Kansas State University. Some schools are as distant as 100 miles from the Center. Inservice activities are taken out to districts which often have never before had inservice experiences.

CHEROKEE COUNTY TEACHER CENTER, Columbus, Kansas, has had a year-long planning grant but is now anticipating the start of their first operational year. Two major strands will be emphasized: "Motivation" and "Classroom Management." In August they will conduct an inservice program which will consist of speakers and concurrent sessions for the two districts with which the Center works-- a big beginning for a most important year. Elaine Herron is the Cherokee County Teacher Center's director.

Teacher centers may serve any number of teachers or districts. While THE STAPLES TEACHER CENTER is a single-district center in Minnesota, the SOUTHWEST ARKANSAS TEACHER CENTER in Texarkana is a consortium project involving sixteen school districts within a six-county area of Arkansas. SATC teachers have investigated the environment, astronomy, folklore and local history which have been integrated into the regular school curriculum. Last year's summer institute, "Curriculum in the Real World," focused on the use of local resources while teaching for different learning styles; this year's "sharefest" will deal with one's cultural heritage--again an inescapable part of one's total environment.

The Rural Network includes, not only Teacher Centers, but also individuals such as Paul Nachtigal, director of the rural component of the MID-CONTINENTAL REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY in Denver, Colorado. Dr. Nachtigal is presently working to

1. clarify the characteristics of rural communities and schools
2. develop alternatives more in tune with rural education
3. keep important rural issues before the public
4. test alternative approaches to rural schooling for quality education

Working in the Rural Network is the UPPER PENINSULA NUTRITION TRAINING PROJECT, a consortium of regional agencies. It includes a number of staff development programs with Jay Matheson at the helm. In addition to regional education agencies, there are state department of education persons such as Henry Bissex of Vermont and Sammie Rodgers of Arkansas, and school district administrators (for example, Peggy Tharpe of Sullivan, Missouri, a principal, and John Wheeler of Cortland, New York, a superintendent). Professional organization personnel and university professors are important members of the Network.

The Network is kept intact by the many publications which have been written by its members. The Exchange has published an article by Peter Martin on his Center's evolution and Heidi Watt's article, "Stages of Teacher Development." The next Transcripts and Commentaries from the Exchange will be drawn from the last two Rural Workparties. Thus members continue their connections with one another as well as form new linkages with organizations having rural interests.

From the Network's beginning in 1977 through the Rural Workparty at Petit Jean, its members' activities have impacted heavily upon all of its centers' philosophies, styles and programs. The Network has increased information and added to problem solving abilities. It will continue to operate and progress with the help and support of interested and involved educators. You are encouraged to join the Rural Network Movement.
"A few Centers working together, make many mountains."